

THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

27 October 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH : Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment
National Intelligence Officer for Warning

FROM : John H. Holdridge
National Intelligence Officer for East Asia

SUBJECT : Warning Assessment: East Asia

The following items were discussed by the Community Representatives at the 22 October Warning Meeting.

China-Vietnam-Kampuchea

1. The advent of the dry season in Kampuchea and the completion of UN consideration of the Kampuchea issue both presage a likely substantial increase in Vietnamese military pressure on the DK forces with the prospect of some of the fighting spilling over into Thailand. Vietnam has significantly strengthened its forces in the Thai-Kampuchea border area over the last several months. In the wake of a series of defeats in the UN and persistent pressure from the DK Hanoi appears intent on moving forcefully to contain if not eliminate the opposition to its military control of Kampuchea. Owing to improved logistics and stockpiling and a greater concentration of forces the Vietnamese are in a position to take forceful action on a wide scale with little warning.

2. The disposition of Thai forces along the border has not changed significantly in recent months. The Thai, at best, would be in a position to offer strong resistance to limited Vietnamese incursions. Bangkok may, in fact, now be reluctant to employ aircraft in response to such incursions as it did in the past because of the augmentation of Vietnamese anti-aircraft defenses.

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3. The Chinese are increasing their military activity in the areas adjacent to Vietnam. They have moved additional aircraft to the border area from central China, deployed naval combatants to the South China sea and positioned a forward command element of an Army that participated in the fighting last year closer to the border. These moves have not changed the balance of forces in the area although they do represent the type of moves that Beijing carried out prior to the fighting last year. Most analysts at this point view these developments as a deliberate attempt to the Chinese to apply pressure on Vietnam and not a prelude to renewed hostilities. These movements serve to remind Hanoi that increased pressure on the DK and/or the Thai will draw a response from Beijing. The Chinese may also have an interest in buttressing Thai morale. Their moves come only a few days before the arrival of the Thai Prime Minister in Beijing.

Sino-Soviet

4. Analysts do not view the deployment of Soviet Backfires to the Far East Military District nor a recent air mobile exercise in the area as contributing in any significant way to the ever present Sino-Soviet tension evidenced earlier in the month by a border incident reported by both sides. The continued deployment of the Minsk task force opposite Cam Ranh Bay is, however, seen by some analysts as evidence of Soviet support for Vietnam in anticipation of greater Chinese pressure. Other analysts believe that the task force is remaining primarily to assist in the salvaging of two aircraft lost at sea in the area. Whatever the intent, the Soviets are demonstrating both their concern about Chinese intentions and their interest in the security situation in Southeast Asia. Carefully worded statements provided by the Soviets to the Germans and the Japanese in recent weeks have underscored these concerns, though largely, at this point, for their propaganda effect.

China Internal

5. Recent student demonstrations in Changsha were interpreted as logically stemming from the more relaxed and open political process the Beijing Government is attempting to foster. Beijing's response was low keyed and effective. More such incidents can probably be anticipated but they will not signal serious problems for the regime.

Laos

6. The tightening of security in Laos coupled with indiscriminate and widespread arrests appears at this point related principally to enhancing security for the National Day celebrations in December rather

than stemming from rumored coup. The Lao are, however, clearly nervous about the lack of security in many areas of the country. Recent insurgent activity, while limited in scope and potential, has added to the feeling of unrest in Vientiane.

Philippines

7. The Marcos regime suffered a severe loss of face as a result of the terrorist bombing at a major tourist convention. The bombing highlighted the government's inability thus far to root out the clandestine network claiming responsibility for this and earlier terrorist actions. Marcos' response has been forceful but balanced and does not suggest that these actions represent, at this point, a serious challenge to the stability of his government. There is, [redacted] lack of information about the terrorist effort and possible links to other political elements inside the Philippines and abroad, and therefore any evaluation of the nature and extent of this opposition force cannot be made. Each agency represented at the meeting was requested to forward to NIO/EA by the end of October specific requirements on the situation stemming from the terrorism in the Philippines to assist the mission in focusing and augmenting its reporting in this key area.

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Korea

8. There was no evidence in the statements and speeches at the North Korean 6th Party Congress that Pyongyang's policies vis-a-vis South Korea have changed in any significant way. Detailed analysis of Pyongyang's proposals for negotiations with the South are, however, still underway. Some analysts believe that the Congress statements may contain some variants on past themes. But Pyongyang's overall position toward the ROK has continued to grow increasingly negative as Chun Doo Hwan has consolidated his power.

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